DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 470 211 PS 030 803

TITLE	Helping Your Child Succeed in School, with Activities for Children Ages 5 through 11.
INSTITUTION	Department of Education, Washington, DC. Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs.
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	65p.; For earlier edition, see ED 401 046. Originally written by Nancy Paulu, with updates for this edition by Marina Balentine Walne and Fran Lehr.
AVAILABLE FROM	ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398. Tel: 877-433-7827 (Toll Free); Tel: 800-872-5327 (Toll Free); Fax: 301-470-1244; e-mail: edpubs@inet.ed.gov; Web site: http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html. For full text: http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; Children; Elementary Education; Family Role; *Learning Activities; Learning Readiness; Parent Materials; *Parent Participation; Parent Role; *Parent Student Relationship; *Parents as Teachers

ABSTRACT

At the heart of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is a promise to raise standards for all children and to help all children meet those standards. This booklet provides information that parents can use to help their child succeed in school. Following an introduction, the second section of the booklet, "The Basics," offers suggestions for parents to help their child make the most of out-of-school time, such as encouraging their child to read, talking with their child, monitoring homework, and monitoring television viewing and video-game playing. The third and largest section of the booklet presents specific parent-child activities arranged by approximate child age levels. Each activity lists its goal, benefits to children, materials needed, and step-by-step instructions. The fourth section answers parents' questions about sharing information with teachers and other school staff. The final section offers "do's and don'ts" about tests and testing. The booklet concludes with a list of educational resources. (HTH)

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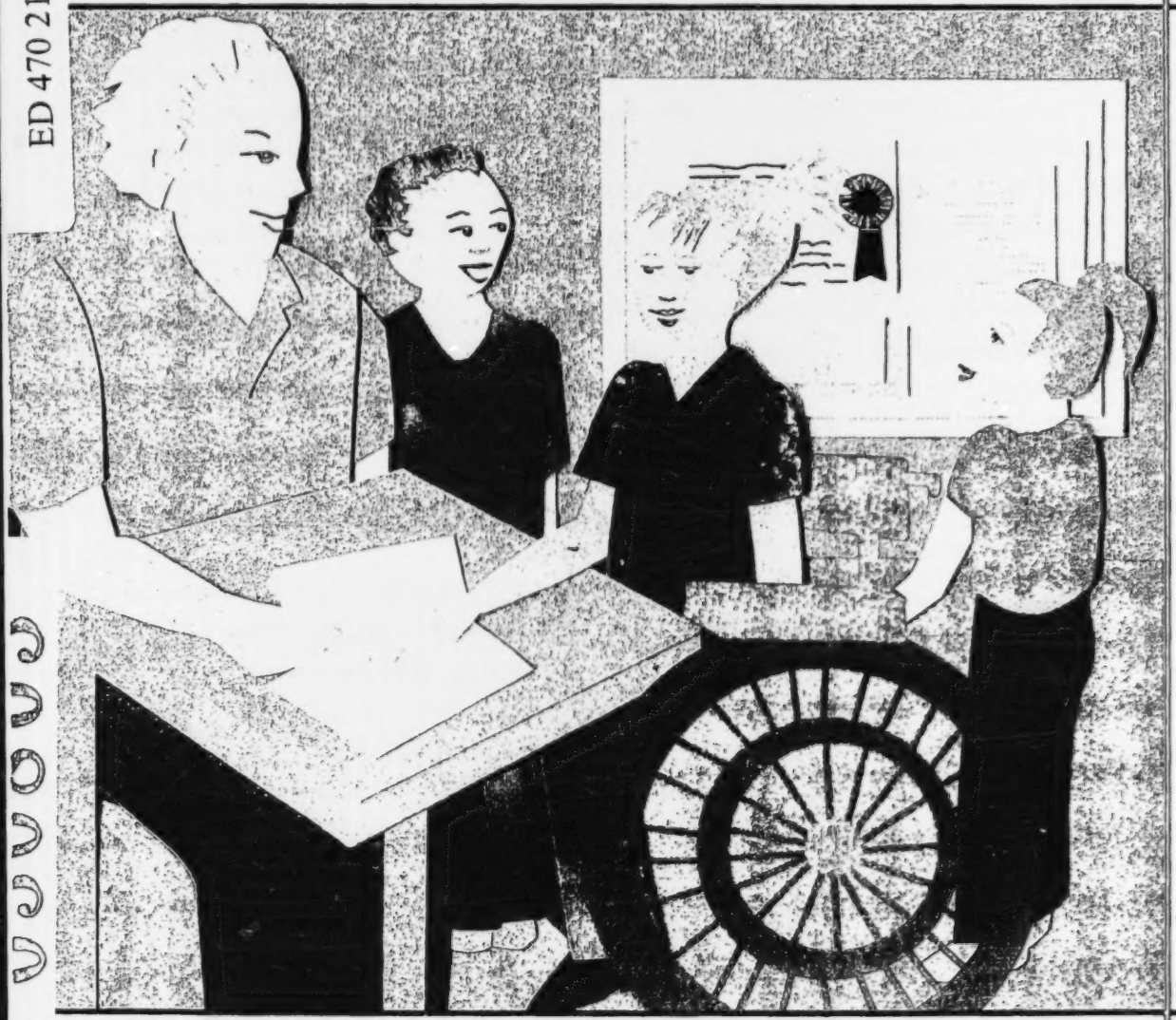

Succeed in School

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No Child LEFT BEHIND

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First published in November 1992.
Revised in 2002.

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U.S. Department of Education
Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs
Helping Your Child Succeed in School
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Books, magazines and programs are mentioned in this booklet as examples and are only a few of many appropriate resources. Listing of materials and resources in this book should not be construed or interpreted as an endorsement by the Department of any private organization or business listed herein.

Helping Your Child Succeed in School

with activities for children ages 5 through 11

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs

Foreword

At the heart of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* is a promise to raise standards for all children and to help all children meet those standards. In support of this goal, President George W. Bush is committed to promoting the very best teaching programs. Well-trained teachers and instruction that is based on research can bring the best teaching approaches and programs to all children and help to ensure that no child is left behind.

However, the hours in a school day are few and the time a teacher can spend with any one child is limited. For children to be successful in school, parents and families need to be actively involved in their children's learning. They need to become involved early and stay involved throughout the school year. In fact, many studies show that what the family does is more important to a child's school success than how much money the family makes or how much education the parents have.

By showing interest in their children's education, parents and families can spark enthusiasm in them and lead them to a very important understanding—that learning can be enjoyable as well as rewarding and is well worth the effort required.

We hope that you will use the information and activities in this booklet to get involved and stay involved and help your child to read better, to take on challenging math and science classes, to value the study of history, the social sciences, art and music—and to prepare for a rewarding life of continuous learning.

Let's get started.

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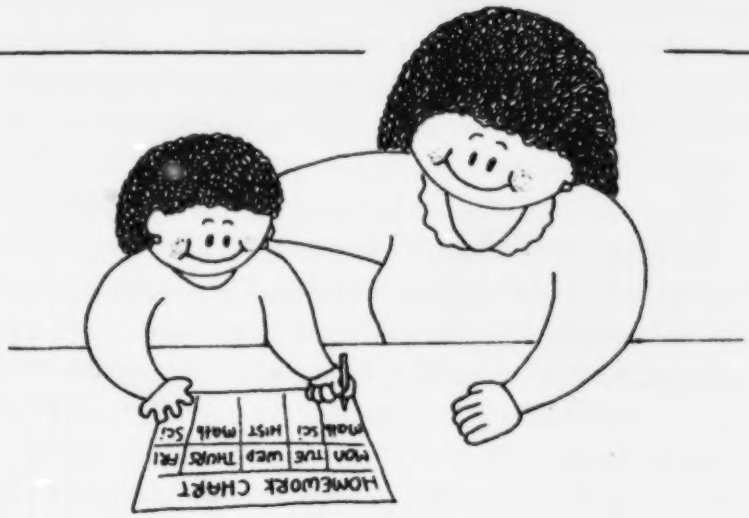

"When it comes to the education of our children, failure is not an option."

— President George W. Bush

Introduction

Every child has the power to succeed in school and in life and every parent, family member and caregiver can help. The question is: *How* can we help our children succeed? The answer comes from a combination of common sense and research about how children learn and about how to prepare them to learn.

We know, for example, that children tend to do the same things as their parents do. What we say and do in our daily lives can help them develop positive attitudes toward school and learning and build confidence in themselves as learners. Showing our children that we both value education and use it in our daily lives provides them with powerful models and contributes greatly to their success in school.

As our children's first and most important teacher, it's important that all parents build and keep strong ties to our children's schools. When parents and families are involved in their children's schools, the children do better and have better feelings about going to school. We help our children to succeed by working with teachers to make sure that they provide curricula and use teaching methods that are based on strong scientific evidence about what works best in helping students to learn.

The purpose of this booklet is to make available to you information that you can use to help your child to succeed in school. The booklet includes

- information about things that you can do at home to contribute to your child's school success;
- activities that you can use to help your child acquire the skills necessary to succeed in school;
- answers to often-asked questions about how to work with teachers and schools; and
- tips on how to help your child with test taking.

The Basics

If you think about it, although school is very important, it does not really take up very much of a child's time. In the United States, the school year averages 180 days; in other nations, the school year can last up to 240 days and students are often in school more hours per day than American students. Clearly, the hours and days that a child is not in school are important for learning, too. Here are some things that you can do to help your child to make the most of that time:

Encourage Your Child to Read

Helping your child become a reader is the single most important thing that you can do to help the child to succeed in school—and in life. The importance of reading simply can't be overstated. Reading helps children in all school subjects. More important, it is the key to lifelong learning. Here are some tips on how to help your child become a reader.

- Start early. When your child is still a baby, reading aloud to him* should become part of your daily routine. At first, read for no more than a few minutes at a time, several times a day. As your child grows older, you should be able to tell if he wants you to read for longer periods. As you read, talk with your child. Encourage him to ask questions and to talk about the story. Ask him to predict what will come next. When your child begins to read, ask him to read to you from books or magazines that he enjoys.

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* Please note: In this booklet, we refer to a child as "him" in some places and "her" in others. We do this to make the booklet easier to read. Please understand, however, that every point that we make is the same for boys and girls.

- Make sure that your home has lots of reading materials that are appropriate for your child. Keep books, magazines and newspapers in the house. Reading materials don't have to be new or expensive. You often can find good books and magazines for your child at yard or library sales. Ask family members and friends to consider giving your child books and magazine subscriptions as gifts for birthdays or other special occasions. Set aside quiet time for family reading. Some families even enjoy reading aloud to each other, with each family member choosing a book, story, poem or article to read to the others.
- Show that you value reading. Let your child see you reading for pleasure as well as for performing your routine activities as an adult—reading letters and recipes, directions and instructions, newspapers, computer screens and so forth. Go with her to the library and check out books for yourself. When your child sees that reading is important to you, she is likely to decide that it's important to her, too.

If you feel uncomfortable with your own reading ability or if you would like reading help for yourself or other family members, check with your local librarian or with your child's school about literacy programs in your community.

* Get help for your child if he has a reading problem. When a child is having reading difficulties, the reason might be simple to understand and deal with. For example, your child might have trouble seeing and need glasses or he may just need more help with reading skills. If you think that your child needs extra help, ask his teachers about special services, such as after-school or summer reading programs. Also ask teachers or your local librarian for names of community organizations and local literacy volunteer groups that offer tutoring services.

The good news is that no matter how long it takes, most children can learn to read. Parents, teachers and other professionals can work together to determine if a child has a learning disability or other problem and then provide the right help as soon as possible. When a child gets such help, chances are very good that she will develop the skills she needs to succeed in school and in life. Nothing is more important than your support for your child as she goes through school. Make sure she gets any extra help she needs as soon as possible and always encourage her and praise her efforts.

For more information about reading, see the U.S. Department of Education booklet, Helping Your Child Become a Reader, listed in the Resources section, page 52.

Talk with Your Child

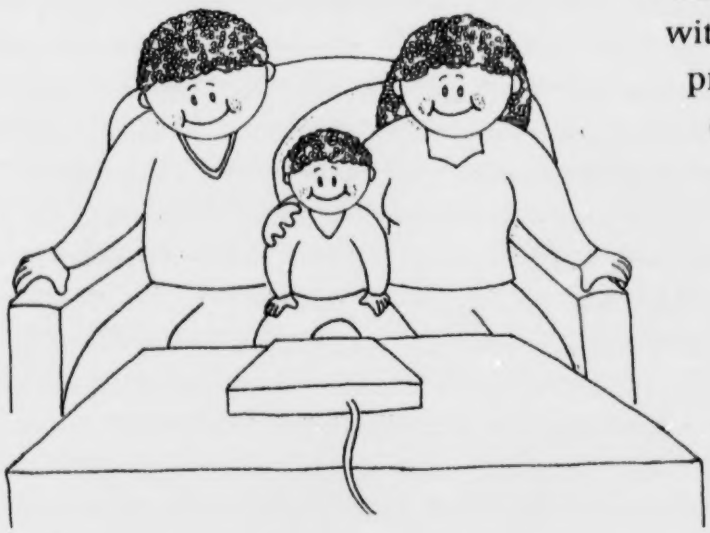
Talking and listening play major roles in children's school success. It's through hearing parents and family members talk and through responding to that talk that young children begin to pick up the language skills they will need if they are to do well. For example, children who don't hear a lot of talk and who aren't encouraged to talk themselves often have problems learning to read, which can lead to other school problems. In addition, children who haven't learned to listen carefully often have trouble following directions and paying attention in class.

Think of talking with your child as being like a tennis game with words—instead of a ball—bouncing back and forth. Find time to talk any place, for example:

* As you walk with your child or ride with her in a car or on a bus, talk with her about what she's doing at school. Ask her to tell you about a school assembly or a field trip. Point out and talk about things that you see as you walk—funny signs, new cars, interesting people.
* As you shop in a store, talk with your child about prices, differences in brands and how to pick out good vegetables and fruit. Give your child directions about where to find certain items, then have him go get them.

* As you fix dinner, ask your child to help you follow the steps in a recipe. Talk with him about what can happen if you miss a step or leave out an ingredient.

* As you fix a sink or repair a broken table, ask your child to hand you the tools that you name. Talk with her about each step you take to complete the repair. Tell her what you're doing and why you're doing it. Ask her for suggestions about how you should do something.



* As you watch TV together, talk with your child about the programs. If you're watching one of her favorite programs, encourage her to tell you about the background of the characters, which ones she likes and dislikes and who the actors are. Compare the program to a program that you liked when you were her age.

* As you read a book with your child, pause occasionally to talk to him about what's happening in the book. Help him to relate the events in the book to events in his life: "Look at that tall building! Didn't we see that when we were in Chicago?" Ask him to tell in his own words what the book was about. Ask him about new words in a book and help him figure out what they mean.

It's also important for you to show your child that you're interested in what he has to say. Demonstrate for him how to be a good listener:

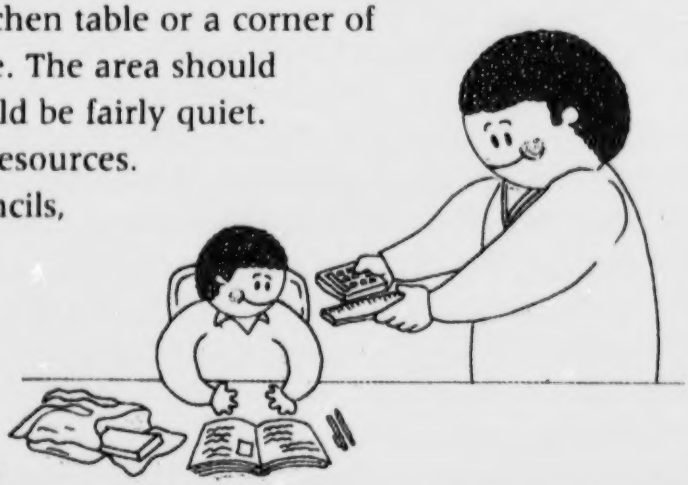
* When your child talks to you, stop what you're doing and pay attention. Look at him and ask questions to let him know that you've heard what he said: "So when are you going to help your granddad work on his car?"

* When your child tells you about something, occasionally repeat what he says to let him know that you're listening closely: "The school bus broke down twice!"

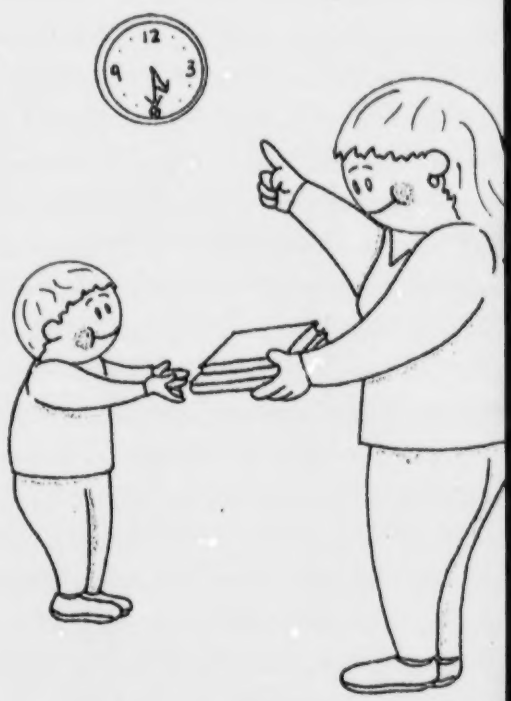
Monitor Homework

Let your child know that you think education is important and so homework has to be done. Here are some ways to help your child with homework:

* Have a special place for your child to study. The homework area doesn't have to be fancy. A desk in the bedroom is nice, but for many children, the kitchen table or a corner of the living room works just fine. The area should have good lighting and it should be fairly quiet. Provide supplies and identify resources. For starters, have available pencils, pens, erasers, writing paper and a dictionary. Other supplies that might be helpful include a stapler,



paper clips, maps, a calculator, a pencil sharpener, tape, glue, paste, scissors, a ruler, a calculator, index cards, a thesaurus and an almanac. If possible, keep these items together in one place. If you can't provide your child with needed supplies, check with her teacher, school counselor or principal about possible sources of assistance.



* Set a regular time for homework. Having a regular time to do homework helps children to finish assignments. Of course, a good schedule depends in part on your child's age, as well as her specific needs. You'll need to work with a young child to develop a schedule. You should give your older child the responsibility for making up a schedule independently—although you'll want to make sure that it's a workable one. You may find it helpful to have her write out her schedule and put it in a place where you'll see it often, such as on the refrigerator.

* Remove distractions. Turn off the TV and discourage your child from making and receiving social telephone calls during homework time. (A call to a classmate about an assignment, however, may be helpful.) If you live in a small or noisy household, try having all family members take part in a quiet activity during homework time. You may need to take a noisy toddler outside or into another room to play. If distractions can't be avoided, your child may want to complete assignments in the local library.

* Don't expect or demand perfection. When your child asks you to look at what she's done—from skating a figure 8 to finishing a math assignment—show interest and praise her when she's done something well. If you have criticisms or suggestions, make them in a helpful way.

One final note: You may be reluctant to help your child with homework because you feel that you don't know the subject well enough or because you don't speak or read English as well as your child. But helping with homework doesn't mean doing the homework. It isn't about solving the problems for your child, it's about supporting him to do his best. You may not know enough about a subject such as calculus to help your child with a specific assignment, but you can help nonetheless by showing that you are interested, helping him get organized, providing a place and the materials he needs to work, monitoring his work to see that he completes it and praising his efforts.

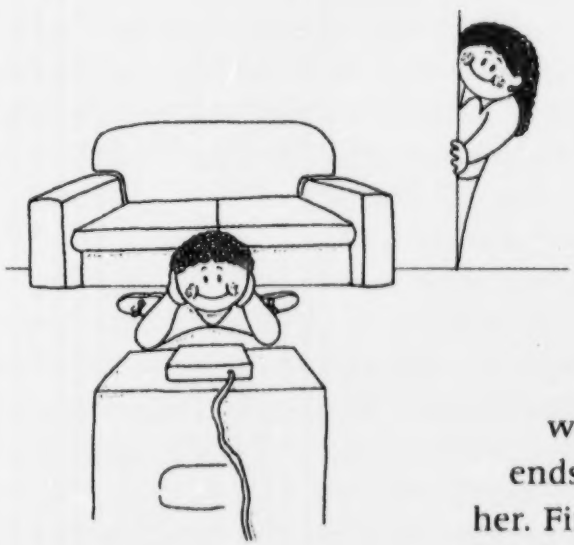
For more information about homework, see the U.S. Department of Education booklets, *(Helping Your Child with Homework and Homework Tips for Parents,)* both listed in the **Resources** section, page 51.

If distractions can't be avoided, your child may want to complete assignments in the local library.

Monitor TV Viewing and Video Game Playing

American children, on average, spend far more time watching TV or playing video games than they do completing homework or other school-related activities. Here are some suggestions for helping your child to use TV and video games wisely:

* Limit the time that you let your child watch TV. Too much television cuts into important activities in a child's life, such as reading, playing with friends and talking with family members.
* Model good TV viewing habits. Remember that children often imitate their parents' behavior. Children who live in homes in which parents and other family members watch a lot of TV are likely to spend their time in the same way. Children who live in homes in which parents and other family members have "quiet" time away from the TV when they read (either alone to each other), talk to each other, play games or engage in other activities tend to do the same.



* Watch TV with your child when you can. Talk with him about what you see. Answer his questions. Try to point out the things in TV programs that are like your child's everyday life.
* When you can't watch TV with your child, spot check to see what she's watching. Ask questions after the program ends. See what excites her and what troubles her. Find out what she has learned and remembered.

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* Go to the library and find books that explore the themes of the TV shows that your child watches.
* Limit the amount of time your child spends playing video games. As with TV programs, be aware of the games he likes to play and discuss his choices with him.

Encourage Your Child to Use the Library

Libraries are places of learning and discovery for everyone. Helping your child find out about libraries will set him on the road to being an independent learner. Here are some suggestions for how to help:

* Introduce your child to the library as early as possible. Even when your child is a toddler, take him along on weekly trips to the library. If you work during the day or have other obligations, remember that many libraries are open in the evening.
* If your child can print his name, it is likely that your library will issue him a library card if you sign for him. See that your child gets his own library card as soon as possible so that he can check out his own books.
* When you take your child to the library, introduce yourself and your child to the librarian. Ask the librarian to show you around the library and tell you about the services it has to offer. For example, in addition to all kinds of books, your library most likely will have magazines of interest to both your child and to you. It will likely have newspapers from

Even when your child is a toddler, take him along on weekly trips to the library.

many different places. Most libraries also have tapes and CDs of books, music CDs and tapes, movies on video and on DVD and many more resources. Your library also might have books in languages other than English or programs to help adults improve their English reading skills.

Your child needs to learn how long she can keep materials and what the fine will be for materials that are returned late.

* Ask the librarian to tell your child about special programs that he might participate in, such as summer reading programs and book clubs and about services such as homework help.
* Let your child know that she must follow the library's rules of behavior. Libraries want children to use their materials and services. However, they generally have rules such as the following that your child needs to know and obey:

—Library materials must be handled carefully.

—Materials that are borrowed must be returned on time. Your child needs to learn how long she can keep materials and what the fine will be for materials that are returned late.

—All library users need to be considerate of each other. Shouting, running and being disruptive are not appropriate library behaviors.

Help Your Child Learn to Use the Internet Properly and Effectively

The Internet/World Wide WEB—a network of computers that connects people and information all around the world—has become an important part of how we learn and of how we interact with others. For children to succeed today, they must be able to use the Internet. Here are some suggestions for helping your child learn to do so properly and effectively:

* Spend time online with your child. If you don't have a computer at home, ask your librarian if the library has computers that you and your child may use. Learn along with your child. If you're not familiar with computers or with the Internet, ask the librarian if and when someone is available at the library to help you and your child learn together to use them. If your child knows about computers, let her teach you. Ask her to explain what she is doing and why. Ask her to show you her favorite Web sites and to tell you what she likes about them. This will help her build self-confidence and pride in her abilities.
* Help your child to locate appropriate Internet Web sites. At the same time, make sure that she understands what you think are appropriate Web sites for her to visit. Point her in the direction of sites that can help her with homework or that relate to her interests.

  Pay attention to any games she might download or copy from the Internet. Some games are violent or contain sexual or other content that is inappropriate for children. Resources such as GetNetWise (http://www.getnetwise.org), a public service provided by Internet corporations and public interest groups, and FamiliesConnect (http://www.ala.org/ICONN/familiesconnect.html), a service of the American Library Association, can help you to make good Web site choices and give you more information about Internet use.

You might consider using "filters" to block your child from accessing sites that may be inappropriate. These filters include software programs that you can install on your computer. In addition, many Internet service providers offer filters (often for free) that restrict the sites that children can visit. Of course, these filters are not always completely effective—and children can find ways around them. The best safeguard is your supervision and involvement.

* Monitor the amount of time that your child spends online. Internet surfing can be just as time consuming as watching TV. Don't let it take over your child's life. Have her place a clock near the computer and keep track of how much time she is spending online. Remember, many commercial online services charge for the amount of time the service is used. These charges can mount up quickly!

* Teach your child rules for using the Internet safely. Let him know that he should never do the following:

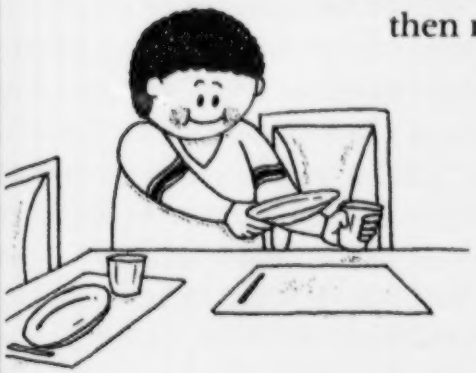
  —tell anyone—including his friends—his computer password;
  —use bad language or send cruel, threatening or untrue e-mail messages;
  —give out any personal information, including his name or the names of family members, home address, phone number, age, school name; or
  —arrange to meet a stranger that he has "talked" with in an online "chat room."

For more information about helping your child use the Internet, see the following publications, listed in the **Resources** section, page 51: *The Librarian's Guide to Cyberspace for Parents and Kids,* American Library Association; *The Parent's Guide to the Information Superhighway: Rules and Tools for Families Online,* Children's Partnership.

Encourage Your Child to Be Responsible and to Work Independently

Taking responsibility and working independently are important qualities for school success. Here are some suggestions for helping your child to develop these qualities:

* Establish rules. Every home needs reasonable rules that children know and can depend on. Have your child help you to set rules, then make sure that you enforce the rules consistently.

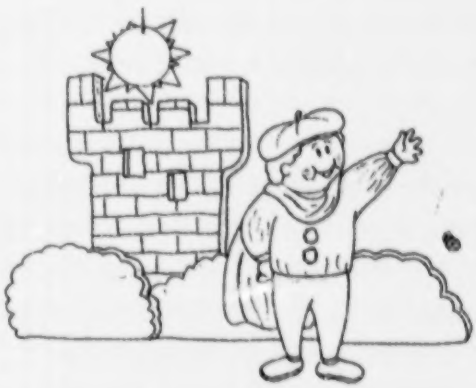


* Make it clear to your child that he has to take responsibility for what he does, both at home and at school. For example, don't automatically defend your child if his teacher tells you that he is often late to class or is disruptive when he is in class. Ask for his side of the story. If a charge is true, let him take the consequences.

* Work with your child to develop a reasonable, consistent schedule of jobs to do around the house. List them on a calendar. Younger children can help set the table or put away their toys and clothes. Older children can help prepare meals and clean up afterwards.

* Show your child how to break a job down into small steps, then do the job one step at a time. This works for everything—getting dressed, cleaning a room or doing a big homework assignment.

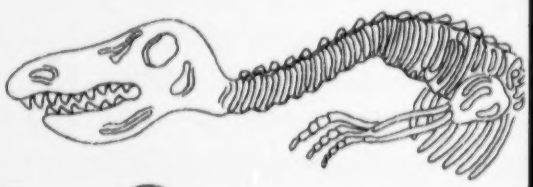
* Make your child responsible for getting ready to go to school each morning—getting up on time, making sure that he has everything he needs for the school day and so forth. If necessary, make a checklist to help him remember what he has to do.
* Monitor what your child does after school, in the evenings and on weekends. If you can't be there when your child gets home, give her the responsibility of checking in with you by phone to discuss her plans.

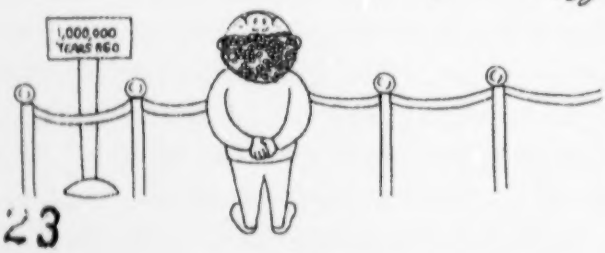


Encourage Active Learning

Children need active learning as well as quiet learning such as reading and doing homework. Active learning involves asking and answering questions, solving problems and exploring interests. Active learning also can take place when your child plays sports, spends time with friends, acts in a school play, plays a musical instrument or visits museums and bookstores.

To promote active learning, listen to your child's ideas and respond to them. Let him jump in with questions and opinions when you read books together. When you encourage this type of give-and-take at home, your child's participation and interest in school is likely to increase.





Activities

What follows are activities that you can do with your child to help build the skills, attitudes and behaviors needed for school success. There is no one "right" way to do the activities. You should make changes and shorten or lengthen them to suit your child's attention span. You might want to use them as a starting point for some activities of your own. If you don't have some of the resources listed for an activity, remember that most public libraries offer free use of books, magazines, videos, computers and other services. Other things that you might need for these activities are not expensive.

Age levels for the activities are indicated at the start of each activity:

Ages 5-7

Ages 7-9

Ages 9-11

Keep in mind, however, that children don't always learn the same things at the same rate. You are the best judge of what your child may be ready to try, so use the age levels as guides as your child learns and grows, not as hard and fast rules. For example, an activity listed for children ages 7–9 may work well with your 5-year-old. On the other hand, the same activity may not interest your child until he is 9 or 10.

As a parent, you can help your child want to learn in a way no one else can. That desire to learn is a key to your child's later success. Enjoyment is important! So, if you and your child don't enjoy one activity, move on to another. You can always return to any activity later on.

Can You Top This?

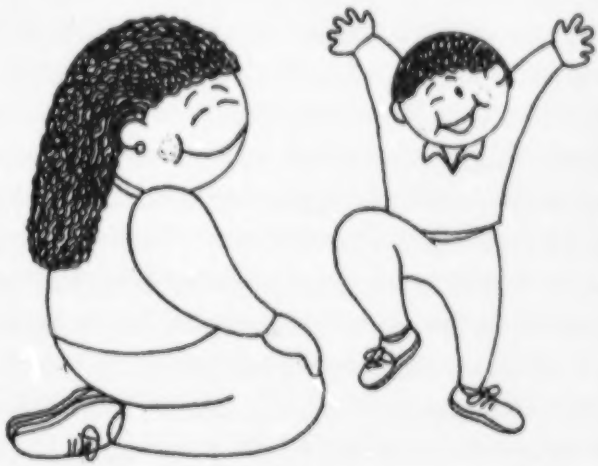
For children ages 5 to 7

Learning to take turns helps your child build spoken language skills as well as learn to work with others.

What to Do

* With your child, make up a story for the two of you to tell together, taking turns saying one sentence at a time.
  - —Begin by deciding on a topic, such as pirates.
  - —Say the first sentence: "Once upon a time a pirate lived in . . ."
  - —Continue taking turns with your child making up and telling parts of the story until you decide to end it—maybe after eight or ten sentences.
* Take turns beginning and finishing a story. Ask other family members and friends to join in.

Working with others, listening to what they say and making good contributions are all valuable in helping children to complete school projects.



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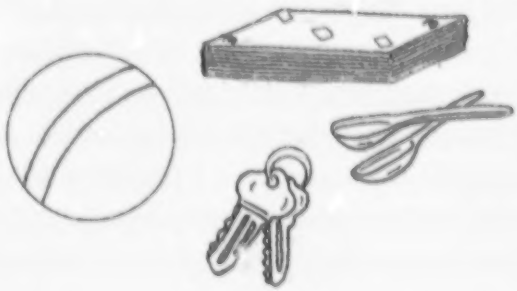
Listen!

For children ages 5 to 7

Listening to and giving directions helps your child to sharpen listening and speaking skills.

What You Need

- Any small object, such as a ball or a photograph
- Objects that can make noise, such as keys, water glasses, spoons and decks of cards



What to Do

- Hide a small object. Give your child directions to find it such as, "Take five steps straight ahead. Turn right. Keep the lamp to your left. Bend down and look to the right." Next, have your child hide the object and give you directions to find it.
- Have your child close his eyes. Use something to make a sound, such as rattling your keys, tapping a spoon against a glass or riffling a deck of cards. Ask your child to guess what's making the sound.
- Clap your hands to tap out a rhythm. Have your child listen and then clap that same rhythm back to you. Make the rhythms harder as he catches on.

For success in school, children need to learn to listen carefully, to see and hear details and to follow and give clear directions.

* Take a walk with your child. Find a place to sit for a few minutes and both close your eyes for 30 seconds or so. Tell each other what you hear: a baby crying, an airplane, a bird singing, cars on the street, leaves rustling.
* Take a walk with your child. This time, take turns telling each other what to do: cross the street, turn left, look down.

It's a Match

For children ages 5 to 7

Sorting and classifying helps your child to pay attention to details and recognize how things are alike and different.

What You Need

* Dishes, flatware, glasses
* Laundry

What to Do

As you empty the dishwasher or wash and dry dishes, ask your child to make stacks of dishes that are the same size, to put glasses that are the same size together and to sort forks, knives and spoons.

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As you empty the clothes dryer, ask your child to match pairs of socks or to put all white things together, all blue things and so forth.

Being able to identify how things are alike and different and to place objects and ideas into categories are important school skills that are used in almost every subject area.

Let's Read

For children ages 5 to 7

Reading is the single most important way for your child to develop the knowledge needed to become successful in school.

What You Need

* Children's books that your child can read
* Books of riddles, tongue twisters and silly rhymes

What to Do

* Read with your child. Take turns, with you reading one page or paragraph and your child reading the next. You might also read the parts of different characters in a story. Be enthusiastic about reading. Read the story with expression. Make it more interesting by talking as the characters would talk, making sound effects and using facial expressions and gestures. Encourage your child to do the same.

* Help your child to read new words by having him use what he knows about letters and the sounds they make to sound out the words.

When reading is a regular part of family life, parents and families send their children a message that it is important, enjoyable and a great way to learn.

* If he is unsure of the meaning of a word, help him to use the surrounding words or sentences to figure it out. If this doesn't help, just tell him what the word means and keep reading.
* Buy a children's dictionary—if possible, one that has pictures next to the words. Then start the "let's look it up" habit.

Author! Author!

For children ages 5 to 7

Reading and writing support each other. The more your child does of each, the better he will be at both.

What You Need

* Pencils, crayons or markers
* Writing paper
* Cardboard or heavy paper
* Construction paper
* Safety scissors
* Yarn or ribbon

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What to Do

- Write with your child. Talk with him about your writing so that he begins to understand that writing means something and has many uses.
- Hang a family message board in the kitchen. Offer to write notes there for your child. Be sure that he finds notes left there for him.
- Help your child write notes or e-mails to relatives and friends to thank them for gifts or to share his thoughts. Encourage the relatives and friends to answer your child.

- As your child gets older, he can begin to write you longer stories. Ask questions that will help him organize the stories. Answer questions about spelling.
- Help your child to turn his writing into books. Paste his drawings and writings on pieces of construction paper. For each book, have him make a cover out of heavier paper or cardboard, then add special art, a title and his name as author. Punch holes in the pages and cover and bind the book together with yarn or ribbon.

Writing helps children to organize their thoughts and gives them an important way to communicate with others.

Now You See It, Now You Don't

For children ages 5 to 7

Doing simple science experiments at home can prepare your child to learn important science concepts—and the need to be patient.

What You Need

- 2 ice cube trays
- Clock
- Small bowls
- Paper and pencil
- Water and other liquids, such as fruit juices

What to Do

- Give your child a pencil and paper and tell her that she is going to be a scientist and take notes about what she observes in some experiments.
- Together with your child, fill one ice cube tray to the top with water. Fill the other tray only half full. Put both trays in the freezer. Have your child record the time. Tell her to watch the clock and check every 30 minutes or so to see if the water in each tray has frozen (if not, wait until it has frozen).

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—Ask your child to write down how long it took the water in each tray to freeze.

—Ask her which amount of water froze faster? Invite her to explain why she thinks this happened.

* Have your child take one ice cube from each tray and put them in separate bowls to melt. Ask her to write down which cube melts faster—the larger one or the smaller one.
* Put one ice cube in a window and another in the refrigerator (not the freezer) and have your child write down how long they each take to melt.
* Freeze samples of liquids such as different kinds of fruit juices. Have your child compare their freezing times to that of water.

Careful observation and note taking are valuable school skills.

How Much Does It Weigh?

For children ages 5 to 7

Build your child's interest in math and science by helping him to observe, estimate and weigh objects at home.

What You Need

* Bathroom scale
* Objects to weigh, such bags of sugar, flour, potatoes or onions; boxes of cereal and cookies; shoes of different sizes
* Paper and pencil

What to Do

* Show your child two objects such as a five-pound bag of sugar and a ten-pound bag of potatoes and ask him to guess which weighs the most. Show him how to use a scale to weigh the objects. Have him record the weights.
* Next show him several objects and ask him to guess how much each weighs. Have him write his estimates, then weigh the objects.
* If you choose, have your child estimate his own weight, as well as that of other family members and use the scale to check his guesses.

Using simple bathroom and kitchen scales at home prepares children for using equipment in school to weigh and measure.

Start to Finish

For children ages 5 to 7

Organization has to be learned. Help your child learn to plan, begin and finish a job.

What You Need

* Pencil and paper
* Items used to do a job around the house, such as watering plants or setting the table.

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What to Do

* Together with your child, select a job he usually does around the house, such as watering the plants. Ask him to make a chart like the one below, then write down or tell you the "Plan," "Do," and "Finish" steps needed to do his job well. Look over these steps together and talk about possible changes.

Plan	Do	Finish
Get supplies 1. watering can 2. paper towels	1. fill can 2. water plants 3. wipe up spills 4. pick off dead leaves	1. throw away used towels and dead leaves 2. put away can

* List the "Plan," "Do," and "Finish" steps of one or two jobs that you do around the house. Ask your child to help you think of ways that you can improve each step.
* When you give your child a new task, help him to plan the steps so that he can do the job well and have a sense of accomplishment.

Students who can plan a task are usually more successful and can do it in a shorter amount of time.

Where Did I Put That?

For children ages 7 to 9

Older children also need help getting organized. Creating a special place for school items will help make mornings smoother for both your child and you.

What You Need

* Cardboard box
* Crayons or markers

What to Do

* Find a sturdy cardboard box or carton large enough to hold notebooks and other school things. Let your child decorate it with pictures, words or artwork and her name. Agree with the child about where to put the box. You might suggest a spot near the front door or the place where she does homework.
* Let your child know that her school things should go in the box as soon as she comes home from school. All homework and anything else she needs for school the next day also should go into it.

Keeping all school items in one place helps teach children how much easier life can be when they are organized and plan ahead.

* Let your child make a rainy day box and put it in a different place (or make it a different color). Have her fill it with "treasures"—games, books, photographs, souvenirs and keepsakes. Invite other members of the family to put surprises in the box from time to time (no snakes or frogs, please!).
* Show your appreciation when your child keeps things in order.

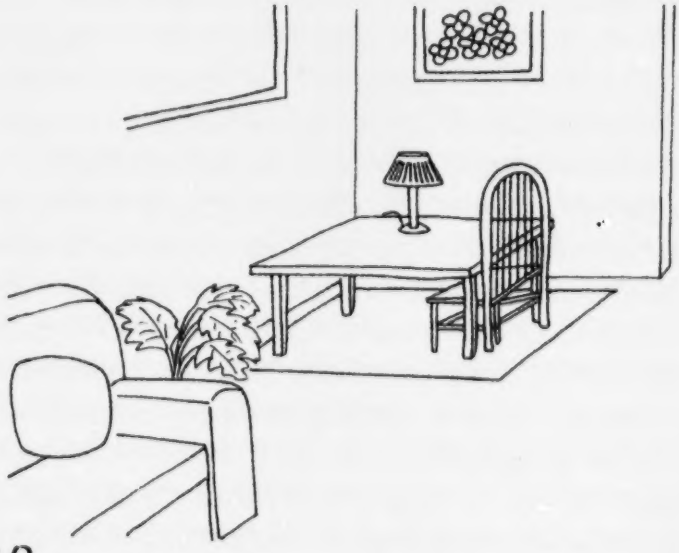
My Place

For children ages 7 to 9

Children tend to argue over the same space (even in a big room). By having an area of the floor marked off, each child has a place that feels like his own.

What You Need

* Space—even a tiny area will do
* Small table
* Chair
* Lamp
* Small floor covering



What to Do

- Find a quiet study area away from the TV and radio for each child (even those not old enough to have homework yet).
- Put a rug or a section cut from an old blanket or sheet on a small area of the floor. Use this to mark off each child's private study space. Put the table and chair on the floor covering. This space does not have to be in the same place all the time. If the table is lightweight, the floor covering can be put down any place it is out of the way (such as near the kitchen if a child needs help as you are fixing dinner). It can also be put away when it is not being used.
- If the study space will always be in the same place, let the child try out different arrangements of the furniture to see what works best. Make sure she arranges the lamp so that the study area is well lit.
- Have her label items with her name.

Having a special place at home helps children to focus on what they are studying.

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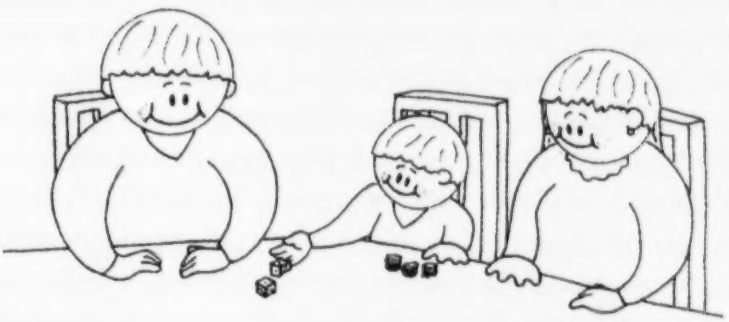
Making Money

For children ages 7 to 9

Help your child learn about money.



What You Need

* Dice
* Pennies, nickels, dimes

What to Do

* This is a good game to play with the family.
  Have each player roll the dice and say the number. Then give the player that number of pennies.
* When a player gets five pennies, replace the pennies with a nickel. When he gets ten pennies, replace them with a dime.
* The first player to reach the set amount—25 or 50 cents, for example—wins.

Children can be confused by money. Some might think that the larger a coin is the more valuable it is—so a penny or nickel would be more valuable than a dime. Playing counting games at home can be valuable in helping children deal with numbers and math concepts in school.

Reading on the Go

For children ages 7 to 9

Show your child that reading has value in everyday life.

What You Need

* Maps of your area
* Bus, subway and/or train schedules for your area

What to Do

* Help your child use a map to mark a route to a special place, such as his school, the football stadium, the mall or his grandmother's house. Help him to figure out the distance to the place.
* Next, give him a bus, subway or train schedule and have him find departure and arrival times and the rates. Have him figure out how long the trip takes and how much it costs.

Children need to learn that reading is not just something they do in school—it is important in all parts of their lives.

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My Time Line

For children ages 7 to 9

You can help your child use events in her own life to gain both a sense of time and to understand the order in which things happen.

What You Need

* Shelf paper
* Yardstick
* Pencils, makers or crayons

What to Do

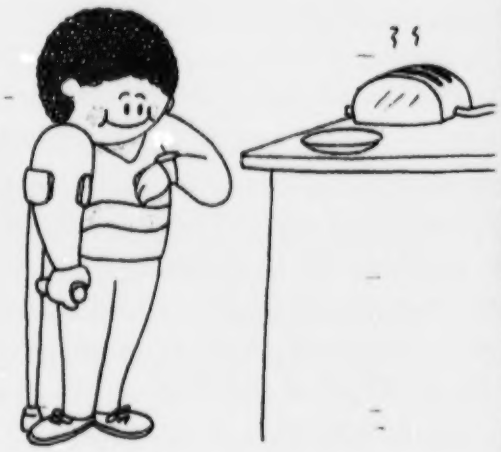
* Place a long piece of shelf paper on the floor. Have your child use a yardstick to draw a line that is three feet long.
* Talk with your child about important dates in her life—the day she was born; her first day of kindergarten, of first grade; the day her best friend moved in next door and so forth. Tell her to write the dates on the line. Invite her to add dates that are important for the whole family—the day her baby brother was born, the day her favorite aunt got married—and the dates of any important historical events.
* Display the finished time line and ask your child to tell other family members and friends what it shows.

Making and reading time lines helps children to learn about the flow of history and to develop an understanding of cause and effect.

Time Flies

For children ages 9 to 11

"I don't have time to do that!" Sound familiar? Planning time is one of the most useful things that your child can learn. Knowing how long something will take can save time and prevent temper tantrums.



What You Need

* Paper and pencil
* Clock
* Calendar

What to Do

* Together with your child, write down estimates of how long it takes each of you to do certain tasks (such as getting ready for school or work in the morning; ironing a blouse; making toast). Use a clock to time at least one of these tasks. Then take turns timing each other. (Be realistic—it's not a race.)
* Talk with your child about what part of a job can be done ahead of time, such as deciding at bedtime what to wear to school the next day.
* Talk about at least two places that you and your child go where you must be on time. What do you do to make sure you are on time?

Being on time or not being on time affects other people. It is important for children to understand their responsibility for being on time—it's not just for grown-ups.

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Homework Made Easy (!)

For children ages 9 to 11

A homework chart can show your child exactly what he needs to do and when he needs to do it.

What You Need

- Poster board or large sheet of sturdy paper
- Marker, pen or pencil
- Clock

What to Do

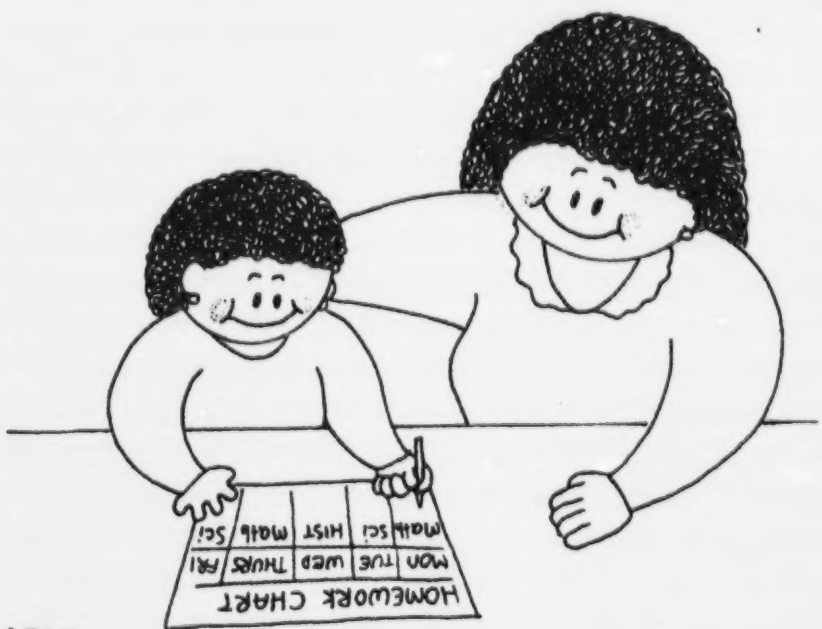
- Help your child to create a homework chart like the following out of a large piece of sturdy paper:

Subject	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
Language Arts					
Social Science					
Math					
Science					

Children need to know that their family members think homework is important. If they know their families care, children have a good reason to complete assignments and to turn them in on time.

* Depending on how many subjects your child has, he may be able to put three or four weeks on each piece of paper.
* Help him to attach a colored marker or pen to the chart so that it is always handy.

* After school each day, have your child put a check mark in each box in which there is a homework assignment. Circle the check when you have seen that the homework is completed.
* Tell your child to try to figure out how long it will take him to complete each homework assignment so that he will be able to schedule his time.



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Divide and Conquer

For children ages 9 to 11

Just about anything is easier to do if it's divided into smaller pieces. As your child's assignments get longer and more complicated, she needs to acquire more organizing and planning skills.

What You Need

* Homework assignments
* Chores
* Paper
* Pencil

What to Do

* Have your child choose a big homework assignment to talk about, such as a geography project. Sit with her and help her to make a list of what she needs to complete the job. For example:

Reference materials (books, maps)

Ask: Can you complete the assignment by just using your textbook? If not, do you need to go to the library? If so, can you check out books or will you have to allow time to stay there and use reference books? Can you use computer Web sites? Do you have the addresses for approved sites? Does your teacher have them?

Taking notes

Do you have a notebook? Pencils?

Finished project

Can you do this assignment on a computer? Will you need to staple the pages together? Do you need a report folder or cover? Do you need to draw pictures or make charts? Can you use computer graphics?

* Help your child to decide the order in which the parts of the job need to be done. Have her number them. To help her estimate how long each part of the assignment will take, tell her to work backward from the date the assignment is due. Have her figure out how much time she'll need to complete each part. Have her write down start and finish dates next to each part.
* Have her put the assignment dates on a calendar or her homework chart.
* Together, think about a household job, such as cleaning out a closet or mowing the yard. Help your child to divide it up into smaller parts.
* Talk with your child about how you divide work at your job or at home.

Learning to see assignments or big jobs in small pieces can make them less overwhelming for a child.

Help Wanted

For children ages 9 to 11

Older children are interested in life beyond school. You can help your child to have a realistic sense of that life and what he can do to prepare for it.

What You Need

* Pencil and paper
* Newspaper help-wanted ads

What to Do

* Talk with your child about what he wants to be and do in the future. Ask, for example, "What job do you think you'd like to do when you get out of school? What kind of education or training do you think you'll need to get this job?"
* Suggest that your child pick two adults he or she knows, such as neighbors or relatives, to talk with briefly about their jobs. Help him to think of at least three questions to ask. Have him write the questions, leaving space for the answers. Here are some sample questions:

What is your job?
How long have you had it?
Do you like it?
Did you need to go to college to get your job?
Did you have to have any special training?
What kind of classes do I need to take in high school for a job like yours?

* After the interview, talk with your child about what he learned.
* Next, show your child the newspaper help wanted ads. Have him find ads for three jobs that he might want to have in the future. Have him read aloud the requirements for a job and talk with him about the skills, education and training he would need to have to do the work.

Jobs change dramatically over time and the job that your child is interested in now may not even exist in the future. Help him to understand that it is important to be well educated and open-minded so that he can be flexible.

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TV Time

For children ages 9 to 11

Good TV programs can spark children's curiosity and open up new worlds to them.

Watching television can be educational for your child or just something that she does to fill the time.

What You Need

* TV set
* World map
* Reference books (or online Web news, biography and geography sites)

What to Do

* Place a world map next to the TV set. Arrange to watch TV news programs with your child.
* After the program have your child use the map to find world news spots.
* Have your child use reference books such encyclopedias or appropriate online Web sites to find out more information about a story, a country or a person in the news.

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Working with Teachers and Schools

Many teachers say that they don't often receive information from parents about problems at home. Many parents say that they don't know what the school expects from their children—or from them. Sharing information is essential and both teachers and parents are responsible for making it happen.

The following questions and answers can help you to get the most out of talking to your child's teacher or with other school staff members.

Q: What do I do first?

Learn everything that you can about your child's school. The more you know, the easier your job as a parent will be. Ask for a school handbook. This will answer many questions that will arise over the year. If your school doesn't have a handbook, ask questions. Ask the principal and teachers, for example: What classes does the school offer? Which classes are required? What are your expectations for my child? How does the school measure student progress? Does it meet state standards? What are the school's rules and regulations?

Ask about specific teaching methods and materials—are the methods based on evidence about what works best in teaching reading or math? Are the science and history textbooks up to date?

Sharing information is essential and both teachers and parents are responsible for making it happen.

Ask if the school has a Web site and, if so, get the address. School Web sites can provide you with read access to all kinds of information—schedules of events, names of people to contact, rules and regulations and so forth.

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Keep informed throughout the school year. If your schedule permits, attend PTA or PTO meetings. If you are unable to attend, ask that the minutes of the meetings be sent to you. Or, find out if the school makes these minutes available on its Web site.

Q: When should I talk with my child's teacher?

Early and often. Contact your child's teacher or teachers at the beginning of the year or as soon as you can. Get acquainted and show your interest.

Tell teachers what they need to know about your child. If she has special needs, make these known from the beginning.

If you notice a big change in your child's behavior, school performance or attitude during the school year, contact the teacher immediately.

Report cards are one indication of how well your child is doing in school. But you also need to know how things are going between report cards. For example, if your son is having trouble in math, contact the teacher to find out when he has his next math test and when it will be returned to him. This allows you to address a problem before it mushrooms into something bigger. Call the teacher if

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your son doesn't understand an assignment or if he needs extra help to complete an assignment. You may also want to find out if your child's teachers use e-mail to communicate with parents. Using e-mail will allow you to send and receive messages at times that are most convenience for you.

Q: What if my child has a problem, such as with homework or not understanding what's happening in class?

Contact the teacher as soon as you suspect that your child has a problem with his schoolwork. Schools have a responsibility to keep you informed about your child's performance and behavior and you have a right to be upset if you don't find out until report-card time that your child is having difficulties. On the other hand, you may figure out that a problem exists before the teacher does. By alerting the teacher, you can work together to solve a problem in its early stages.

Request a meeting with the teacher to discuss problems. Tell her briefly why you want to meet. You might say, "Tim is having trouble with his social studies homework. I'm worried about why he can't finish the assignments and what we might do to help him." If English is your second language, you may need to make special arrangements, such as including in the meeting someone who is bilingual.

Approach the teacher with a cooperative spirit. Believe that the teacher wants to help you and your child, even if you disagree about something. Don't go to the principal without first giving the teacher a chance to work out the problem with you and your child.

Q: How do I get the most out of parent-teacher conferences?

Be prepared to listen as well as to talk. It helps to write out questions before you leave home. Also jot down what you want to tell the teacher. Be prepared to take notes during the conference and ask for an explanation if you don't understand something.

In conferences, the teacher should offer specific details about your child's work and progress. If your child has already received some grades, ask how your child is being evaluated.

Talk about your child's talents, skills, hobbies, study habits and any special sensitivities such as concern about weight or speech difficulties.

Tell the teacher if you think your child needs special help and about any family situation or event that might affect your child's ability to learn. Mention such things as a new baby, an illness or a recent or upcoming move.

Ask about specific ways to help your child at home. Try to have an open mind.

At home, think about what the teacher has said and then follow up. If the teacher has told you that your child needs to improve in certain areas, check back in a few weeks to see how things are going.

Be prepared to take notes during the conference and ask for an explanation if you don't understand something.

Q: What if I don't agree with a school rule or with a teacher's assignments?

First, don't argue with the teacher in front of your child. Set up a meeting to talk about the issue. Before the meeting, plan what you are going to say—why you think a rule is unfair or what exactly you don't like about an assignment. Get your facts straight and don't rely on anger to win your argument. Try to be positive and remain calm. Listen carefully.

If the teacher's explanation doesn't satisfy you, arrange to talk with the principal or even the school superintendent. Do not feel intimidated by titles or personalities. An educator's primary responsibility is to ensure the success of each and every student in his classroom, school or district.

Q: What's the best way for me to stay involved in my child's school activities?

Attend school events. Go to sports events and concerts, attend back-to-school night, parent-teacher meetings and awards events, such as a "perfect attendance" breakfast.

Volunteer in your school. If your schedule permits, look for ways to help out at your child's school. Schools often send home lists of ways in which parents can get involved. Chaperones are needed for school trips or dances (and if your child thinks it's just too embarrassing to have you on the dance

floor, sell soft drinks down the hall from the dance). School committees need members and the school newsletter may need an editor. The school may have councils or advisory committees that need parent representatives. If work or other commitments make it impossible for you to volunteer in the school, look for ways to help at home. For example, you can make phone calls to other parents to tell them about school-related activities or maybe help translate a school newsletter from English into another language.

Q: What if I don't have time to volunteer as much as I would like?

Even if you can't volunteer to do work at the school building, you can help your child learn when you're at home. The key question is, "What can I do at home, easily and in a few minutes a day, to reinforce and extend what the school is doing?" This is the involvement that every family can and must provide.

The schools also need to take steps so that parents feel good about what they're doing at home and know they're helping.

If work or other commitments make it impossible for you to volunteer in the school, look for ways to help at home.

Helping Your Child with Test Taking

You can be a great help to your child if you will observe these do's and don'ts about tests and testing:

- ✯ Do talk to your child about testing. It's helpful for children to understand why schools give tests and to know the different kinds of tests they will take.
- ✯ Explain that tests are yardsticks that teachers, schools, school districts and even states use to measure what and how they teach and how well students are learning what is taught. Most tests are designed and given by teachers to measure students' progress in a course. These tests are associated with the grades on report cards. The results tell the teacher and students whether they are keeping up with the class, need extra help or are ahead of other students.
- ✯ The results of some tests tell schools that they need to strengthen courses or change teaching methods. Still other tests compare students by schools, school districts or cities. All tests determine how well a child is doing in the areas measured by the tests.
- ✯ Tell your child that occasionally, he will take "standardized" tests. Explain that these tests use the same standards to measure student performance across the state or even across the country. Every student takes the same test according to the same rules. This makes it possible to measure each student's performance against that of others.

- Do encourage your child. Praise her for the things that she does well. If your child feels good about herself, she will do her best on a test. Children who are afraid of failing are more likely to become anxious when taking tests and more likely to make mistakes.
- Do meet with your child's teacher as often as possible to discuss his progress. Ask the teacher to suggest activities for you and your child to do at home to help prepare for tests and to improve your child's understanding of schoolwork.
- Do make sure that your child attends school regularly. Remember, tests reflect children's overall achievement. The more effort and energy your child puts into learning, the more likely it is that he will do well on tests.
- Do provide a quiet, comfortable place for studying at home and make sure that your child is well rested on school days and especially on the day of a test. Children who are tired are less able to pay attention in class or to handle the demands of a test.
- Do provide books and magazines for your child to read at home. By reading new materials, a child will learn new words that might appear on a test. Ask your child's teacher for lists of books for outside reading or get suggestions from your local library.
- Don't get upset because of a single test score. Many things can influence how your child does on a test. She might not have felt well on test day or she might have been too nervous to concentrate. She might have had an argument with a friend before the test or she might have been late to school because the school bus got caught in traffic. Remember, one test is simply one test.
- Don't place so much emphasis on your child's test scores that you lose sight of her well being. Too much pressure can affect her test performance. In addition, she may come to think that you will only love her if she does well on tests.

★ Do help your child avoid test anxiety. It's good for your child to be concerned about taking a test. It's not good for him to develop "test anxiety." Test anxiety is worrying too much about doing well on a test. It can mean disaster for your child. Students with test anxiety can worry about success in school and about their future success. They can become very self-critical and lose confidence in their abilities. Instead of feeling challenged by the prospect of success, they become afraid of failure. If your child worries too much about taking tests, you can help to reduce the anxiety by encouraging the child to do the following things.

—Plan ahead. Start studying for the test well in advance. Make sure that you understand what material the test will cover. Try to make connections about what will be on the test and what you already know. Review the material more than once.

—Don't "cram" the night before. This will likely increase your anxiety, which will interfere with clear thinking. Get a good night's sleep.

—When you get the test, read the directions carefully before you begin work. If you don't understand how to do something, ask the teacher to explain.

—Look quickly at the entire text to see what types of questions are on it (multiple choice, matching, true/false, essay). See if different questions are worth different numbers of points. This will help you to determine how much time to spend on each part of the test.

—If you don't know the answer to a question, skip it and go on. Don't waste time worrying about one question. Mark it and, if you have time at the end of the test, return to it and try again.

After the Test

Your child can learn a great deal from reviewing a graded exam paper. Reviewing will show him where he had difficulty and, perhaps, why. This is especially important for classes in which the material builds from one section to the next, as in math. Students who have not mastered the basics of math are not likely to be able to work with fractions, square roots, beginning algebra and so on.

Discuss the wrong answers with your child and find out why he chose the answers. Sometimes a child didn't understand or misread a question. Or, he may have known the correct answer but failed to make his answer clear.

You and your child should read and discuss all comments that the teacher writes on a returned test. If any comments aren't clear, tell your child to ask the teacher to explain them.

Resources

The following are among the resources that provided information for this booklet.

American Federation of Teachers. (2001). *Helping Your Child Succeed: How Parents & Families Can Communicate Better with Teachers and School Staff.* Washington, DC. (available online at http://www.aft.org/parentpage/communicating/index.html)

American Library Association. (1999). *Librarian's Guide to Cyberspace for Parents and Kids.* Chicago, IL. (available online at http://www.ala.org/parentspage)

American Library Association. (2002). *Libraries, Children and the Internet.* Chicago, IL. (available online at http://www.ala.org/parents/librariesandinternet.html)

Canter, Lee. (1995). *What to Do When Your Child Needs to Study: Helping Your Child to Master Test-taking and Study Skills.* Los Angeles: Canter & Associates.

Children's Partnership. (1998). *The Parents' Guide to the Information Superhighway: Rules and Tools for Families Online.* Washington, DC. (available online at http://www.childrenspartnership.org)

Clark, Rosemary, Hawkins, Donna and Vachon, Beth. (1999). *The School-Savvy Parent: 365 Insider Tips to Help You Help Your Child.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Epstein, Joyce L. (2001). *School, Family and Community Partnerships.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Goldstein, Sam and Mather, Nancy. (1998). *Overcoming Underachieving: An Action Guide to Helping Your Child Succeed in School.* New York: John Wiley.

Hall, Susan L. and Moats, Louisa C. (1998). *Straight Talk about Reading: How Parents Can Make a Difference during the Early Years.* Chicago: NTC Publishing Group.

LaForge, Ann E. (1999). *What Really Happens in School: A Guide to Your Child's Emotional, Social and Intellectual Development, Grades K–5.* New York: Hyperion.

Ramey, Sharon L. and Ramey, Craig T. (1999). *Going to School: How to Help Your Child Succeed: A Handbook for Parents of Children 3 to 8.* New York: Goddard Press.

U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *Helping Your Child with Homework.* Washington, DC. (available online at http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov)

U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *Homework Tips for Parents.* Washington, DC. (available online at http://www.nclb.gov/parents/homework/index.html)

The activities in this booklet were adapted from the following sources:

Rich, Dorothy. (1992). *Megaskills: How Families Can Help Children Succeed in School and Beyond* (rev. ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *Helping Your Child Become a Reader.* Washington, DC. (available online at http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/hyc.html)

U.S. Department of Education. (1999). *Helping Your Child Learn Math.* Washington, DC.

U.S. Department of Education. (1992). *Helping Your Child Learn Science.* Washington, DC.

Federal Sources to Contact for More Information

ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
Toll Free: 1–800–328–0272
http://www.ericec.org/

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education and the National Parent Information Network (NPIN)
Children's Research Center
51 Gerty Drive
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Champaign, IL 61820–7469
Toll Free: 1–800–583–4135
ERIC/EECE: http://ericeece.org
NPIN: http://npin.org

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities
P.O. Box 1492
Washington, DC 20013–1492
Toll Free: 1–800–695–0285 (voice & TTY)
http://www.nichcy.org

National Institute for Literacy (NIFL)
800 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20006
Toll Free: 1–800–228–8813
http://www.nifl.gov

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National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Clearinghouse
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
P.O. Box 3006
Rockville, MD 20847
Toll Free: 1–800–370–2943
http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/publications.htm

National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education
U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
555 New Jersey Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20208
Phone: 202–219–1935
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ECI/

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20202
202–205–5465
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/

No Child Left Behind
Parents Tool Box
U.S. Department of Education
Toll Free: 1–888–814–NCLB
http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov/parents/index.html

Acknowledgements

This publication was originally written by Nancy Paulu, with updates for the current edition completed by Marina Balentine Walne and Fran Lehr. Illustrations were done by Adjoa Burrowes and Joseph Matos.

This booklet has been made possible with the help of many people and organizations, including Reid Lyon, Margaret Feerick and Kyle Snow of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, who reviewed drafts, provided materials and suggestions and generously contributed from their own experiences. In addition, a special thanks to Todd May and Menahem Herman in the Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs for their help in managing the design, development and production of this booklet.

No Child Left Behind

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). This new law represents his education reform plan and contains the most sweeping changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act since it was enacted in 1965. It changes the federal role in education by asking America's schools to describe their success in terms of what each student accomplishes. The act contains the president's four basic education reform principles.

- Stronger accountability for results
- Local control and flexibility
- Expanded options for parents
- An emphasis on effective and proven teaching methods

In sum, this law—in partnership with parents, communities, school leadership and classroom teachers—will ensure that every child in America receives a great education and that no child is left behind.

For more information on No Child Left Behind, visit the website at www.nochildleftbehind.gov or call 1–800–USA–LEARN.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Intergovernmental
and Interagency Affairs

400 Maryland Avenue, SW • Washington D.C. 20202

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

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